

Why Are So Many Pastors Committing Suicide?

In another **church** tragedy, Pastor **Isaac Hunter**—the son of the spiritual adviser to President Obama—has reportedly taken his own life. Hunter's death is making national headlines because of his megachurch father Pastor Joel Hunter's influence on the White House, his marriage troubles and an undated suicide note found last year, but his death is far from the only pastoral suicide in recent months.

Just days ago, a pastor who was grieving his dead wife reportedly shot himself in front of his mother and son, expressing that he was hearing his dead spouse's voice and footsteps. Pastor Ed Montgomery and his late wife, prophetess Jackie Montgomery, served at the Full Gospel Assemblies International church in Hazel Crest, Ill.

In November, a Georgia pastor killed himself in between Sunday services. Larrinecia Sims Parker, wife of the Rev. Teddy Parker Jr., found the pastor in the driveway of their home with a self-inflicted gunshot wound, Houston County coroner Danny Galpin reports.

Why the sudden rash of pastors committing **suicide**? Suicide is not a new problem among clergy, but three known suicides in less than two months begs a deeper look at the issue.

There is no lack of statistics about pastors and depression, burnout, health, low pay, spirituality, relationships and longevity—and none of them are good. According to the Schaeffer Institute, 70 percent of pastors constantly fight depression, and 71 percent are burned out. Meanwhile, 72 percent of pastors say they only study the Bible when they are preparing for sermons; 80 percent believe pastoral ministry has negatively affected their families; and 70 percent say

they don't have a close friend.

The Schaeffer Institute also reports that 80 percent of seminary and **Bible** school graduates will leave the ministry within five years. It's not clear how many commit suicide, but it is clear that pastors are not immune to it. Psychologists point to several reasons why people commit suicide, from depression to psychosis to stressful life situations. But one thing is certain: Whatever drives someone to take their own life ultimately begins in the mind. Suicidal thoughts precede **suicide**.

"Suicidal thoughts have numerous causes," according to Mayo Clinic. "Most often, suicidal thoughts are the result of feeling like you can't cope when you're faced with what seems to be an overwhelming life situation. If you don't have hope for the future, you may mistakenly think suicide is a solution. You may experience a sort of tunnel vision, where in the middle of a crisis you believe suicide is the only way out."

As it turns out, **suicidal thoughts** are not uncommon. Nearly 8.3 million adults age 18 and older in the United States—that's 3.7 percent—had serious thoughts of suicide in the past year, according to a study called "Suicidal Thoughts and Behaviors Among Adults > 18 Years" released by the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention. Although some suicides are impulsive, most are planned out. More than 2 million adult Americans made a suicide plan in the past year, and about half that many went through with the plan.

Again, suicide starts with a thought. Indeed, every action we take starts with a thought. As one who struggled with depression for years, I am not trying to oversimplify the solution, but rather merely point out one contributing factor. Many of the harmful actions we take originate from the seed of a thought Satan whispers to our souls. That seed grows as our minds reason out the benefits of acting on the thought.

For those contemplating **suicide**, I believe the seed grows in their minds as they reason themselves out of living because life's circumstances are too overwhelming.

When the enemy plants a vain imagination in our minds, we have two choices: cast it down or meditate on it. When we meditate on vain imaginations, we tend to connect demonic dots that create skewed pictures of reality. Believing what we see in our thought life is real, we talk ourselves into taking action based on a wrong perception. Although there are issues of chemical imbalances, I believe this is what happens with many **suicides**. The enemy plants a seed in the form of a thought that an already distraught soul doesn't discern as a demonic attack on their life.

If we want to win the battle against suicide in the pulpit and the pew, we need to, among many other things, take ahold of Scriptures that instruct us about the battle in our mind. Paul told us, "The weapons of our warfare are not carnal but mighty in God for pulling down strongholds, casting down arguments and every high thing that exalts itself against the knowledge of God, bringing every thought into captivity to the obedience of Christ, and being ready to punish all disobedience when your obedience is fulfilled" (2 Cor. 10:4-6). No one can take your thoughts captive for you, but you can take your own thoughts captive, and it starts with girding up the loins of your mind (1 Pet. 1:13).

Paul also offered this advice: "Whatever things are true, whatever things are noble, whatever things are just, whatever things are pure, whatever things are lovely, whatever things are of good report, if there is any virtue and if there is anything praiseworthy—meditate on these things. The things which you learned and received and heard and saw in me, these do, and the God of peace will be with you" (Phil. 4:8-9). If we do what the Word says—if we meditate on what the Word tells us to meditate on—the enemy's seeds won't take root in our souls.

If you see your pastor or anyone else struggling with depression or hear them speak disturbing thoughts that aren't in line with the Word of God, pray and ask God what He would have you do. Then do it. Suicide is a leading cause of death in the United States, and the enemy is targeting our spiritual leaders in this hour. Let's rise up and battle against this disturbing trend in the name of Jesus.

Jennifer LeClaire is news editor at Charisma. She is also the author of several books, including *The Spiritual Warrior's Guide to Defeating Jezebel*. You can email Jennifer at @ or visit her website [here](#). You can also join Jennifer on Facebook or follow her on Twitter.